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**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Violence Against Women in Pakistan: Analysis of Print Media Reports during the years of 2015 and 2016 in Sindh Province of Pakistan**

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**ABSTRACT**

In the male-dominated society, violence against women becomes a reality. This paper analyses the cases of 858 violent crimes reported in the Sindhi daily newspapers during the years of 2015 and 2016 in the Sindh province of Pakistan. The reports analysed by using content analysis procedure found there were 199 cases of abduction, 157 of honour killing, 228 of murder, 108 of rape and 166 of suicides. In the reported cases women was a victim, and almost in the 50% of the cases the husbands was perpetrator who used firearm weapon to carry their acts. The motives behind honour killings and murders were domestic conflicts and suspicion of illicit relationships of women with men, while for the kidnapping/abduction, land disputes and matrimonial issues remained significant. Women being victims deserve serious attention to protect from such violence by having effective policies especially in the rural areas of Sindh and Pakistan

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**Introduction**

In 1947, British India was partitioned along religious lines to create two independent nations: India, which had most of the Hindu population, and Pakistan, which was predominantly Muslim. Pakistan has four provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In the months before and after partition more than half a million people died in sectarian violence. Pakistan occupies a strategic crossroads of South Asia, bordering Afghanistan, and Iran to the west, China to the North and India to the east. Its relations with these countries, above all Afghanistan and India, have had critical consequences for foreign and domestic politics, particularly with respect to the role of military and the course of

Islamization. Continuing controversy over the role of Islam in Pakistan's political life and tension among country's ethnic groups has dominated the process of state-building in Pakistan since independence.

Pakistan political history includes several constitutional crises, frequent periods of political turmoil, economic instability, martial laws, wars, and internal strife on sectarian, ethnic, language, and provincial autonomy issues. This has affected the evolution of a political culture, the development of democratic norms, and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

## **Literature Review**

### **Violence against Women**

Human beings have not only been victims of natural disasters and diseases but of violence by fellow humans as well. In a male-dominated society, violence against the women becomes a predictable reality of their lives, which is perpetuated and supported from family to the state level.

Pakistani society is characterized by tremendous linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity. There are also considerable economic disparities between different sections of the society, as well as divisions of caste, tribe, clan and class. It is dominated by a feudal and tribal values system, with strong patriarchal trends which permeates attitudes and behaviour even where the actual social structure has changed. All these social, cultural, economic and historical factors have directly and indirectly affected the status and rights of women at every level and in all sectors (Khawar & Shaheed, 1989).

Tahira S. Khan, in her well-researched book mentions that, "...the discrepancy in public and private life sphere in Pakistan has manifested in increased gender-based violence against women; one form of such violence is honour related...local and global market forces have shaped, reshaped and 'de-shaped' Pakistan social and political institutions...contradictory attitude of family towards male and female sexuality, and dual societal standards in judging male and female conduct are responsible for the persistence of honour related violence..." (Khan, 2006).

A 1985 report by the Pakistan Commission on the Status of Women, whose findings were suppressed by the General Zia's' administration, concluded that, '...women in Pakistan were treated as possessions rather than self-reliant, self-regulating humans. They are bought, sold, beaten, mutilated and even killed with impunity and social approval. They are dispossessed and disinherited in spite of legal safeguards and the vast majority are made to work for as long as 16 to 18 hours a day without payment... the average rural woman of Pakistan is born in near slavery, leads a life of drudgery and dies invariably in oblivion...' (Government of Pakistan, 1986).

From birth, the life of average Pakistan women is characterized by her economic, cultural, social and political subordination. There is considerable disparity between the status of men and women in Pakistan. That includes negative social and cultural practices, discriminatory legislation, and inadequate policies, plan and programs, including budget allocations. The lack of political will and the absence of meaningful or effective affirmative action ensures that the disparities continue without any significant change.

Violence against women is present in several forms in Pakistan. Domestic Violence is fairly widespread and takes form of physical, mental and emotional abuse. Rape remains the commonest form of violence against women, though only a fraction gets reported or prosecuted because of the shame attached to the victim. In the Punjab province, 706 cases were reported in the press during 1998 alone, out of which 55% of the victims were minors and more than half of total cases were of gang-rape (Oxfam, 2004).

According to a report by Oxfam, 80 percent of the women in Pakistan experience violence within their homes. Despite the fact that many incidents of "honour killing" are not reported, in 2002, more than 450 Pakistani women or girls were killed by relatives in so called 'honour killings', and at least as many were raped (Oxfam, 2004). Several inhuman customary practices, including bartering girls to settle disputes, marriage to the Quran and murder of women in the name of honour continue unabated sanctified by those who commit the crime as cultural traditions.

Rooted in the patriarchal, feudal, and tribal value systems, many of its forms are so firmly entrenched in Pakistani culture that they are ignored, condoned, or not even recognized as violence by the larger sections of the society. Federal minister for Postal Services, Senator Israrullah Zehri defended the barbaric and inhuman crime of burying women alive as "traditional custom", because they wanted to marry on their own wish. Mir Hazar Khan Bijarani, Minister for Education, headed a *Jirga* which made a decision to give as compensation five little girls (aged 2-5 years) to settle a feud between two warring tribes (The News International, 2008). Wife abuse is rarely considered a crime socially unless it takes an extreme form, an attitude reflected in the behaviour both of law-enforcement agencies and the judiciary. Domestic violence sometimes takes extreme forms of murder or attempted murder, a commonly used method being that of stove burning.

The official figures for the kidnapped women during 1998 were a total of 4529 country wide. Sexual harassment of women in the public or the workplace is a common phenomenon, and while widely reported in media, is rarely reported to the police or taken notice of. An increasing form of violence used to settle a score is that of public humiliation of women by stripping them naked in public.

As apparent from the above, women continue to face the grave biases, discriminatory practices and forms of violence prevalent in highly patriarchal society at several levels. From birth, socio-cultural norms prescribe a different set of roles,

responsibilities and behaviour patterns for women, denying them equal access to several facilities and opportunities at par with men, which maintain their subservience and subordination. "We have seen fight for human rights and civil liberties all our lives but wonder what sort of human rights are being claimed by these girls in jeans" said a senator. (Bilour, 1999). This situation and opinion of politicians further affects women's own self-confidence, limits their access to information and skills, and reinforces in them the social perception of having a lower social status than men. Combined with their unequal economic situation, the discriminatory or gender-insensitive laws and policies, and lack of sufficient political will to seriously address the root causes of the problem, the task of extricating themselves from this situation becomes monumental (HRCP, 1990).

The data collected by the Human Rights Commission Pakistan shows a substantial increase in human rights violations from 2005 to 2006. Statistics for 2006 show a 29% increase in murder cases as in 2005. In 2006, killings to reclaim honour increased by 24% from 2005. The majority of these women were married (in 2005, 88.6% were married; in 2006-86.3% were married) and the most common relationship of the accused to the victim is marital. In 2005, 296 husbands were accused of killing their wives and in 2006 this figure escalated to 355. The most reported reason for killings in both 2005 and 2006 was illicit relationships. Killings due to property disputes increased almost twofold in 2006: from 9 in 2005 to 19 in 2006. The most common weapons used for murder in both 2005 and 2006 were firearms, with a 22.6% increase in the use of these weapons in 2006. Unfortunately, the percentage of the accused that were arrested in 2006 decreased by 4.5% from 2005 (HRCP, 2007).

Rape continues to be one of the most human rights violations and is therefore the least reported both in the news and to the HRCP. The year 2006 saw a 129% increase in the number of rape and gang rape cases reported. In 2006 the number of cases of rape involving minors alone as the victims had more than doubled since 2005: from 111 to 293. In 2006, married women continued to be the most targeted social group in the rape statistics. What is perhaps most alarming in these statistics, is that the accused in the rape cases are predominantly influential people in the community or landlords with the highest number of rapists in both 2005 and 2006, as residents of the victim's community. (HRCP, 2007).

The *Haddood* Ordinance, promulgated by General Zia in 1979, seeks to define and reinforce the notion of a "pure and chaste" Pakistani citizen. The *Haddood* Ordinance subsumes adultery, fornication, rape and prostitution under the rubric *zina* and treats them as offences against the State. Thus law, religion and patriarchy interconnected and drew their coercive power through the state. The result was a series of retrogressive laws designed to curb the rights of women (Khan, S. 2001).

Suicides and attempted suicide cases increased from 2712 in 2005 to 3919 in 2006 (including men and women) country wide. A 44.5% increase was seen between the two years. The three main reasons for these attempted and committed suicides in

2005 were: 1) Domestic Problems, 2) Admonishment and 3) Unemployment. The method used was what is most readily available. The people from lower classes who predominantly commit suicide due to social and economic pressures, used the pesticides to commit suicide.

‘Honor killings’ and domestic violence including maiming and harmful traditional practices continues in Pakistan at a high level. *Jirgas* (i.e. councils of elders), which the Sindh High Court banned in 2004, continued to take place and sentence girls and women to cruel punishments. In Mardan and Swabi districts, 60 girls and women were handed over to their family’s opponents to settle conflicts and as compensation for murder in three months in mid-2006 (Jehangir & Jilani, 1990).

Human Rights Watch report of 2019 mentions that “Violence against women and girls – including rape, so-called honour killings, acid attacks, domestic violence, and forced marriage – remains a serious problem. Pakistani activists estimate that there are about 1,000 “honour” killings every year.”

According to the HRCP 2018 report: “Across categories, women continue to suffer brutal violence. The overwhelming majority of violent deaths of women were at the hands of men known to them, most often family members. “Honour” was cited in murders of women committed by fathers, husbands, brothers, and in-laws, although further investigations revealed much less lofty motivations”.

## **Definitions**

### **Murder**

Murder is the unlawful and malicious or premeditated killing of one human being by another; also, any killing done while committing some other felony, as rape or robbery (Siegel, 2010). The act of murder is unique to humanity. While animals kill outside of their own species for food, and may fight, wound, or very occasionally kill within species for territory, it is only within mankind that one person – out of malice or rage, for gain or revenge – takes another person's life by violent means. By definition, a murder is a *homicide* (the killing of one human being by another) that is committed intentionally, or with malice aforethought. Legal Dictionary defines murder as ‘Intentional homicide (the taking of another person’s life), without legal justification or provocation’.

### **Kidnapping**

Kidnapping is the crime of seizing, confining, abducting, or carrying away a person by force or fraud, often to subject him or her to involuntary servitude, in an attempt to demand a ransom, or in furtherance of another crime. Most countries consider it a grave offence punishable by a long prison sentence

Kidnapping, in law, is the taking away of a person by force, threat, or deceit, with intent to cause him to be detained against his will. Kidnapping may be done for ransom or for political or other purposes.

In criminal law, kidnapping is the taking away or asportation of a person against the person's will, usually to hold the person in false imprisonment, a confinement without legal authority. This may be done for ransom or in furtherance of another crime. Legal Dictionary defines it as 'To confine a person against his or her will'. Encyclopedia Americana defines kidnapping as the crime of 'stealing a person' and carrying him away. Sometimes the ransom demanded is not money but political extortion, to draw attention to a cause or to demand the release of political or other prisoners.

### **Honour Killings**

'Honour Killing' means 'killing to reclaim honour'. An honor killing is the murder of a family or clan member by one or more fellow family members, when the murderers (and potentially the wider community) believe that the victim has brought dishonor upon the family, clan, or community, normally by (a) utilizing dress codes unacceptable to certain people or (b) engaging in certain sexual acts (Lippmann, McConville, & Yerushalmi, 1988). These killings result from the perception that defense of honor justifies killing a person whose behavior dishonors their clan or family (Human Rights Watch 2001).

Human Right Watch defines 'Honor Killing' as 'acts of violence, usually murder, committed by male family members against female family members, who are held to have brought dishonor upon the family'. A woman can be targeted by (individuals within) her family for a variety of reasons, including refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, being the victim of a sexual assault, seeking a divorce – even from an abusive husband – or (allegedly) committing adultery (Human Rights Watch (1992). The mere perception that a woman has behaved in a way that 'dishonors' her family is sufficient to trigger an attack on her life. Honor Killing is one form of extreme violence perpetrated on women by men. In some parts of Pakistan, it is also called *Karo Kari* (literally: blackened man, blackened women). Pakistan is one of the countries where the incidents of honor killings are among the highest in the contemporary world (Jafri, 2008).

### **Rape**

Rape is any form of sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, and oral) or other sexual contact forced by one person upon another using physical force, threat, deception, or, coercion (Blair, 2007). Rape is form of violence rather than sex (Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1983).

Although the legal definition of 'adultery' differs in nearly every legal system, the common theme is sexual relations outside of marriage, in one form or

another (Auolakh, 1986) Under Muslim Law, adultery (extramarital sex in general) is the sexual intercourse by a married person (whether man or woman) with someone to whom they are not married (Esposito,1986).

The term “zina” conflates two practices: adultery among the married and fornication among the unmarried (Khan, S. 2006). At the same time, the legal definition of zina blurs the lines between adultery, fornication, and rape. In Zina Ordinance, ‘Zina’ is defined as sexual intercourse without being validly married, while “zina-bil-jaber”, rape, is defined as sexual intercourse without being validly married when it occurs without consent.

Adultery is a violation of the marital contract and one of the major sins in Islam.

Qur'anic verses regarding adultery include (Ali 1938):

- “The woman and the man. Guilty of fornication. Flog each of them. With a hundred stripes” (Quran 24:2)
- "Do not go near to adultery. Surely it is a shameful deed and evil, opening roads (to other evils)" (Quran 17:32).
- "Say, 'Verily, my Lord has prohibited the shameful deeds, be it open or secret, sins and trespasses against the truth and reason'" (Quran 7:33).
- "Women impure are for men impure, and men impure are for women impure and women of purity are for men of purity, and men of purity are for women of purity." (Quran 24:26).

Though strict Muslim Law prescribes severe punishments for extramarital sex, by both men and women (premarital sex is punishable with up to 100 lashes, while adultery is punishable by stoning), to obtain conviction of zina [consensual premarital sex], the act of sexual penetration must be attested by at least four male Muslim witnesses of good character, with the accused having a right to testify and their testimony given the most weight in the eyes of the judge/s (Sumar & Nadvi,1988). Also, punishments are reserved to the legal authorities and false accusations are to be punished severely ([www.usc.edu](http://www.usc.edu); [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) ) It has been said that these legal procedural requirements were instituted to make it impossible to obtain conviction ([www.asmasociety.org](http://www.asmasociety.org)). (It should be noted that the above punishment of stoning is never given in the Quran but only in the Hadith. The only punishment for adultery given in the Quran is one hundred lashes and restriction of future marriage to another adulterer or the partner in the act).

## **Suicide**

Suicide is taking away one’s life due to any reason. Suicide is often called the by-product of depression. Before any person commits suicide, he or she actually attempts it. Moreover, suicidal ideas precede the suicidal act. Once the person

decides for attempting suicide, he or she also thinks and chooses the method or way of doing it. The method of suicide depends upon the circumstances, intentions, availability of the things required for suicide and the severity of the emotional status of the person.

### **Rationale of this study**

“One is not born a woman, one becomes one” (Beauvoir, 1972).

Although there are the studies which tell us about the simple numbers of the cases of violence against women, there was need to study and analyse the scenario a little bit in depth. Hence this study, going deeper and more extensive, studied the relationship of the aggressor and the victim, the type of the weapon used in the crime, and the different methods used in suicide. Not only this but it also analysis the various reasons and motives behind the different acts of violence committed against women.

This study unfolds the down-to-earth facts of the real social structure and functions of the social institutions in Pakistan, and will be helpful in identifying the interventions that can be carried out by the government and non-governmental organizations and guide the policy making and law-enforcing agencies to operate more efficiently and effectively for preventing of and curbing these heinous acts of violence against women.

Collecting, validating and analysing the data from the media have been a credible source of authentic information. Actually, it is this media reporting which has been highlighting so many cases otherwise it becomes rather difficult in Pakistan to hear frequently about this violence against women. In so many instances, the law-enforcing agencies have only come to know about the incidents and arrested the aggressors after the report has been published in the media.

### **Material and Methods**

To achieve above objectives of the study a methodological approach of the use of newspapers was used. All the cases of violence against women reported in the main Sindhi print media for the 2015 to 2016 were sorted out under different categories. In fact, many of the cases of violence against women do not get registered at the police stations. But due to strong reporting network of the newspapers in all the big and small cities of the province, seldom a case is missed. To ensure that the data is comprehensive, complete and reliable, two major Sindhi Daily were chosen. These two Daily newspapers were selected on basis of largest circulation and readership, credibility of the information and active and extensive network of reporters in the area of study. These newspapers are printed in local language of Sindh province of Pakistan These details of newspapers are:

1. Daily Kawish ([www.thekawish.com](http://www.thekawish.com))



2. It has a daily circulation of 1, 00,000 hard printed copies.
3. Daily Awami Awaz ([www.awamiawaz.com](http://www.awamiawaz.com))

It has the daily circulation of 50,000 hard printed copies.

The data was collected from the printed hard copies of both newspapers of their issues published from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016. To scrutinize the everyday hard print copy of the newspapers and collate the data of the reported cases of violence against women, experienced editors/journalists were recruited who already had the relevant experience. They were trained by the investigator for a full day hands-on workshop and filling the data on the designed tool for data collection. Thus, all the cases of violence against women reported in all issues of mentioned newspapers were sorted out and collated in that designed format for the purpose. The format was transliterated in local language so that it can be filled out easily with the required data.

Five major types of violence i.e. Murder, Kidnapping, Rape, Honour Killing and Suicide were identified. The cases of violence against women for the above five categories were filled in related columns of format. The data thus collected was encoded and analysed on SPSS and MS Office. Moreover, for reliability & validity purpose, the data was also, as far as possible, verified with information and records from a credible NGO, *Aurat* (Women) Foundation, Pakistan.

### **Results and Discussion**

The total number of the violence against women in the selected categories from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016 was 858 in Sindh province of Pakistan. Table 1 shows the summarized information.

**Table 1**

<b>Category of the crime</b>	<b>Number of cases</b>	<b>% of total cases</b>
Murder	228	26.6
Kidnapping	199	23.2
Rape	108	12.6
Honour Killing	157	18.3
Suicide	166	19.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>100%</b>

As we can see the percentage of the cases of murder is the highest (26.6%) among the reported cases, followed by kidnapping (23.2%), Suicide (19.3%), Honour Killing (18.3%), and Rape (12.6%) respectively. The detailed findings for these different categories are discussed below separately.

## Murder

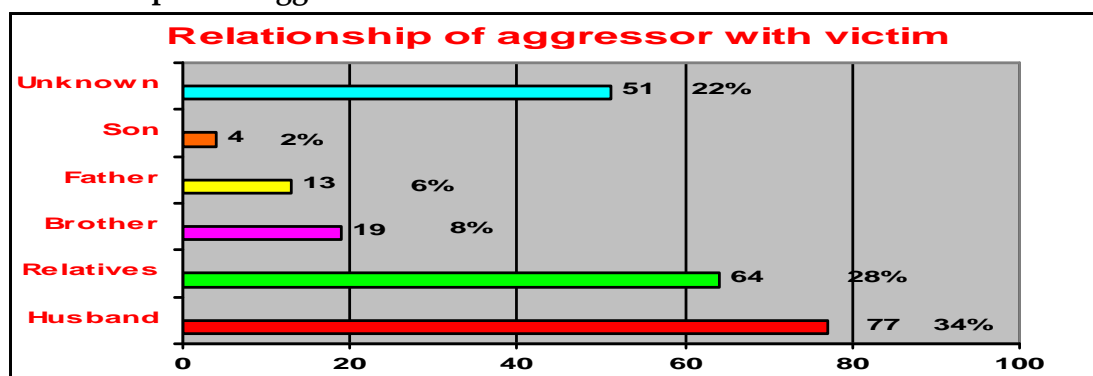
There were 228 cases of murder in the 26 districts of the Sindh province as reported in the print media. This category of the crime committed against women has highest percentage i.e. 27%. The data was further analysed for the three important variables: i.e. motives behind the murder, relationship of aggressor with victim, and weapon/methods used in the crime. The table 2 elaborates this.

**Table No. 2**

S. No.	Motives	Cases	%
1	Domestic conflict	50	22
2	Old enmity/revenge	34	15
3	Sudden anger	25	11
4	Promised marriages	21	9.2
5	Accidental	6	2.6
6	Land dispute	6	2.6
7	Robbery	5	2.2
8	Matrimonial dispute	5	2.2
9	Monetary dispute	2	0.8
10	Free will marriage	2	0.8
11	Want of son child	2	0.8
12	No information	70	30.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>100%</b>

It is evident from the table that the highest percentage of the murder (22%) was due to domestic conflict, followed by old enmity/revenge, sudden anger and promised marriages. By promised marriages is meant that when girls are born, their parents promise verbally that they will give their girl in marriage to son of other relative. But when the kids become adult and reach the age of marriage, and if due to one reason or other, the verbal promise done years before is not fulfilled, the dispute erupts which may lead to violence, if not solved amicably.

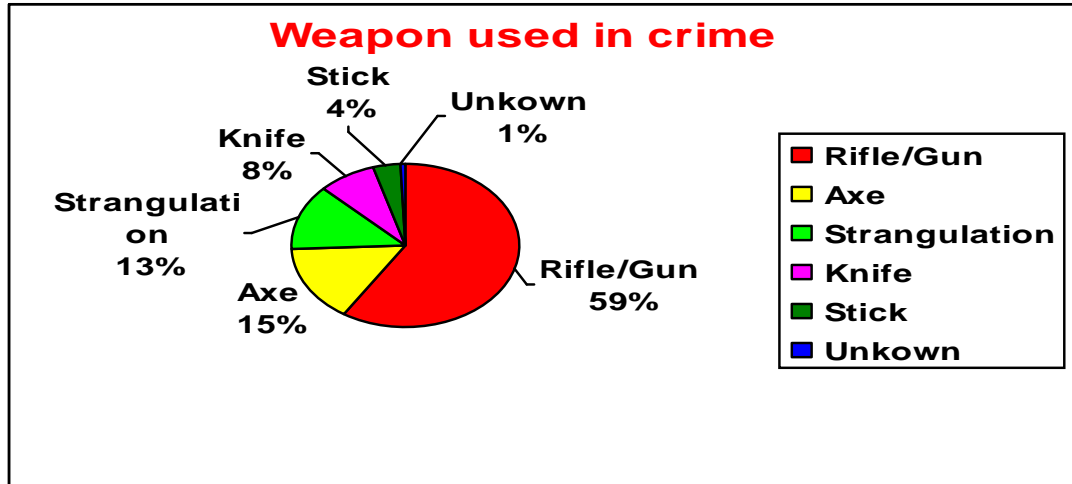
### Relationship of the aggressor with the victim in murder cases



**Graph 1**

The above graph shows that the 34% of the aggressors is the husband of the victim, followed by the relatives (28%). Whereas 8% for the brothers, 6% for father, 2% for son and 22% were unknown.

### Weapons used



**Graph 2**

The weapon most used is the rifle or gun (59%) followed by axe (15%) and strangulation (13%). It may be noted that rifle or gun are normally kept in the rural areas not only for the purpose of safety due to insecure law and order situation but also as a symbol of dignity and power.

### Kidnapping

Out of the total cases of 199, 196 were committed in rural areas, whereas only 3 were from urban areas. Following table shows the motives of kidnapping.

**Table 3**

S. No.	Motives	Cases	%
1	Promised marriages	51	25
2	Old enmity	30	15
3	Tribal feud	26	13
4	Revenge	20	10
5	To force for marriage	6	3
6	Land dispute	3	1.5
7	No information	63	32
	<b>Total</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>100%</b>

The large numbers of cases committed in rural areas portray the patriarchal system where kidnapping is largely due to matrimonial and land disputes peculiar to rural society.

### **Rape**

Total 108 women/girls were raped during the said period. All of them, except one, were from the rural areas. The incidents of rape were solely for the attainment of sexual lust by the aggressor. But in some cases, although sexual lust is embodied in it, the act was committed to take revenge or the victims were vulnerable to this odious act because they were very poor, orphans, or physically handicapped. There were some instances of incest and paedophile also. Findings show most victims of rape were the poor and orphan (28.7%).

### **Honour Killing**

The 'honour killing' is a murder, but we have put and analysed it under a separate category to highlight it for killing of a women/girl under the specific pretext i.e. when the aggressor suspects or finds that the victim has extra/pre marital relations with other man. It is based on 'as reported and printed' in the media, and as claimed by the aggressor. It is overwhelmingly husbands (59%) who killed their wives. The women were also killed, in the name of honour, by brothers (19%) and relatives (15%).

### **Suicide**

There were 166 women who committed suicide. All the victims were from the rural areas. The major reason found was domestic conflicts. It may be recalled here that in the cases of murders, the highest percentage of cases was also due to this same reason. The other reasons included violence by husbands (15%), and poverty (9%). The most common method used (71%) was pesticides. This may be due to easy availability of the pesticides at home all through the year because of its use in the lands for crop cultivation. The two other common ways of committing suicide were found to be hanging and jumping in the canal or well.

### **Conclusion**

Violence against the women is not only a phenomenon particular to Pakistan. It has been affecting the women world over, especially in the underdeveloped countries. It is a central human right issue which is indicator of inequality and discrimination as well as stigmatization. The analysis and the results found and depicted in this study portrait a horrifying scenario and state of affairs for the women in Sindh, Pakistan.

The statistics show that about 60-70% of the aggression was done by husbands, followed by the relatives, brothers and fathers. Likewise, the weapon

mostly used (in 60-70% of the cases) was the rifle or gun, followed by axe. It must be remembered here that rifle or gun is the weapon frequently available in the rural areas along with the axe. It is considered as a symbol of dignity, power and prestige to possess a gun or rifle. Men prefer to carry it when they travel from one village to another or on occasions of celebrations or any other cultural event. Also is the fact that it is kept for safety purpose. Moreover, there are not only licensed weapons, but unlicensed weapons are also kept widely by the people. The axe is commonest item available at home.

Overwhelming use of pesticides while committing suicide was due to the fact that, being primarily an agricultural society, the rural people have the pesticides available at their homes throughout the year. They use different types of pesticides, in liquid and granules form, for different crops cultivated in their lands. Hence, easy availability of the source was the main reason for this method of suicide.

As mentioned by Sohail Akbar Warraich, a leading expert on law, "Successive administrations have so far only paid lip service to the issue...an attempt to introduce a resolution condemning 'honour crimes' in the Senate could not even be heard...although President General Musharaf stated his unequivocal commitment he took no concrete steps during his years of 'absolute power'..." (Warraich, 2005).

The aim of this study was to identify the cases and nature of violence perpetuated against women to communicate information to international community for creating supportive environment and mobilizing social pressure to help end violence against women. The findings also provide support for the policy making and institutional mechanism to end violence against women.

### **Recommendations**

It is suggested:

- That a same study be done covering a period of few years to analyse the trend of these violence against women.
- That a comprehensive study be carried out that follows deeply these incidents of violence: whether any legal report was lodged with police or not; whether the aggressor was arrested and proceedings carried out by the court of law or not; whether the reason or motive stated by the aggressor or as reported in the media was a real one?

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